

WORLD AGRICULTURAL WEATHER HIGHLIGHTS

March 10, 2000

1 - UNITED STATES

In February, a very active and persistent storm track provided drought relief to the western Corn Belt and Ohio Valley. Frequent late-month precipitation on the central and southeastern Plains improved soil moisture for winter wheat, which broke dormancy and began to develop due to unusually warm conditions. Meanwhile, drought intensified across the South, including the southern High Plains, stressing pastures and dryland winter grains. Wet weather continued in much of the West, further improving soil moisture reserves, high-elevation snow packs, and spring runoff prospects. Especially heavy precipitation fell in California, where spring fieldwork was delayed by the cool, wet conditions. Beneficial precipitation in early March eased the Southwest's 5-month dry spell, but significant moisture again bypassed the southern High Plains.

2 - SOUTH AMERICA

Widespread, above-normal February rainfall favored reproductive to filling summer crops in Argentina and filling soybeans in most of southern Brazil. The southernmost Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul received slightly below-normal February rainfall, but early-March rainfall boosted soil moisture. Also, somewhat excessive early-March rainfall slowed early soybean harvesting in the northernmost Brazilian soybean states of Mato Grosso and Goias. February rainfall was variable across Uruguay, which had been the hardest hit by the dryness this season.

3 - EUROPE

In February, unseasonably warm, dry weather stressed vegetative winter grains in Spain and Portugal. Below-normal rainfall reduced moisture supplies for dormant winter grains across Italy and southeastern Europe. Near- to above-normal precipitation in northern Europe maintained adequate soil moisture for winter crops, while unseasonably mild weather in the west caused winter grains to break dormancy.

4 - NORTHWESTERN AFRICA

Drought developed in Morocco and western Algeria, causing rapid deterioration in conditions for winter grains in the vegetative stage. Rainfall diminished in eastern Algeria and Tunisia, causing a decline in crop conditions.



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5 - FSU-WESTERN

In February, overwintering conditions remained favorable for dormant winter grains. Near- to above-normal precipitation continued to boost moisture supplies in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltics. In early March, unseasonably mild weather melted most of the protective snow cover in Ukraine and southern Russia. Reports indicated that early spring fieldwork was underway in southwestern Ukraine.

6 - SOUTH ASIA

In February, unseasonably heavy rain increased irrigation reserves for rice in southern and eastern India and Bangladesh. Local cotton harvests were reportedly disrupted in the south. Showers also benefited winter wheat and oilseeds in north-central India, but rainfall was below normal elsewhere.

7 - EASTERN ASIA

In the North China Plain, winter wheat remained dormant throughout February. In early March, however, warmer weather caused winter wheat to begin losing winter hardiness. Supplemental irrigation will be needed in March as the crop breaks dormancy. Below-normal February rainfall reduced moisture supplies for winter rapeseed and wheat across the Yangtze Valley. Across southeastern China, near-normal rainfall increased moisture supplies for sugarcane development and upcoming early rice transplanting.

8 - SOUTHEAST ASIA

Below-normal February rainfall reduced moisture supplies for main-season rice in Java, Indonesia and oil palm in Sumatra. Near- to above-normal rainfall aided oil palm throughout most of peninsular Malaysia. Scattered showers favored winter rice in Thailand and Vietnam. Widespread above-normal rainfall boosted moisture supplies for second-season crops in the Philippines, but likely caused some flooding, especially in the east-central islands.

9 - SOUTH AFRICA

During February, mild, showery weather aided reproductive corn and other summer crops, including sugarcane in coastal areas. The devastating flooding that hit the region in late February and early March stayed well north of the commercial corn areas.

10 - AUSTRALIA

In mid-February, near- to above-normal rainfall soaked Queensland's maturing cotton and sorghum. Favorably drier weather covered summer crop areas of New South Wales. Since late February, heavy showers improved the local drought situation in the southeast. Heavy rain and local flooding also hit Queensland's northern sugarcane areas.